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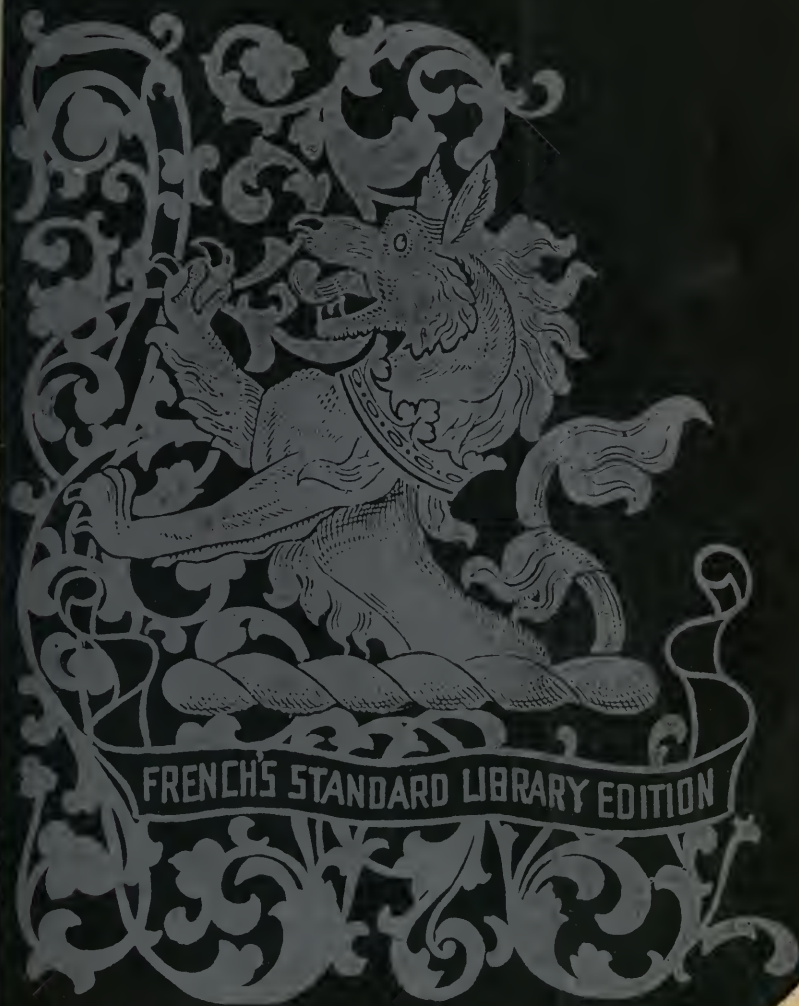
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Brignol and His Daughter

BY

ALFRED CAPUS



SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New Y



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Brignol and His Daugh-
ter: a Comedy in Three
Acts: by Alfred Capus:
Translated by Barrett H.
Clark

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ALFRED CAPUS

Alfred Capus—born at Aix, Provence, in 1858—is one of the most popular and prolific writers of modern French comedy. Although he has for many years been active in the field of journalism, and is now joint-editor of the *Figaro*, his plays are seen regularly on the French stage and are accounted among the most brilliant and successful of contemporary works.

French critics claim Capus as a realist. He is not a realist in the same sense of the word as Brieux or Cœre, for his outlook on life is essentially gay and optimistic. Optimism, together with a generous infusion of rather superficial cynicism, is the keynote to his best work. One of his finest comedies, *Luck* (*La Veine*) shows how people, merely as a result of waiting for the right moment, may be happy and successful with comparatively small effort.

Brignol et sa fille, the present translation of which for the first time affords to English readers a glimpse of the comic side of this dramatist, was originally produced in 1895. It was one of the most popular plays of the time.

In 1914 Capus was elected a member of the French Academy.

BRIGNOL AND HIS DAUGHTER

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

COMMANDANT BRUNET
BRIGNOL
VALPIERRE
CARRIARD
MAURICE VERNOT
THE CONCIERGE
MADAME BRIGNOL
CÉCILE BRIGNOL
MADAME VALPIERRE
THE MAID

SCENE: *Paris.*

TIME: *the present.*

Brignol and His Daughter

ACT I

SCENE: *An office, fitted up with various articles of parlor furniture—rather pretentious in appearance. To the right, a table with letter-files and a safe; beside it, a bookshelf. At the back is the main entrance; there are doors right and left, one opening upon a bedroom, the other upon the parlor.*

(As the curtain rises, BRIGNOL is sitting at his desk.)

(The CONCIERGE enters.)

CONCIERGE. I've just seen the landlord, Monsieur. He refuses to wait another minute. I ought to add that he is very angry with you.

BRIGNOL. That will all be arranged.

CONCIERGE. This is the first time a tenant has been three terms behind.

BRIGNOL. It's nothing serious.

CONCIERGE. Monsieur will allow me to state that within a few days——

BRIGNOL. What?

CONCIERGE. The bailiff! You have already received the first notification, which means——

BRIGNOL. Don't you think I know all about it? I know more than the landlords: I'm a lawyer.

CONCIERGE. I'm going. *(Enter MADAME BRIG-*

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NOL) Then you haven't anything special you want me to tell the landlord, have you?

BRIGNOL. Say I'll pay him to-morrow.

CONCIERGE. To-morrow, surely? So far, your furniture hasn't been seized, but——

BRIGNOL. And rest assured, it won't be.

CONCIERGE. Monsieur, your humble servant.—
Madame!

(He goes out, back.)

MME. BRIGNOL. Have you seen the people you are going to see?

BRIGNOL. Don't fear. I have two or three affairs in hand now that are bound to succeed.

MME. BRIGNOL. Remember how last term you were counting on two or three affairs, and we were unable to pay then!

BRIGNOL. That has nothing to do with the case. Don't worry. We have the money—practically.

MME. BRIGNOL. *(After a pause)* They've just arrived.

BRIGNOL. *(Absently)* Who?

MME. BRIGNOL. My brother and his wife. They'll come in to kiss you in a minute. Now there is to be no quarreling between you, remember we've agreed to let bygones be bygones. Cécile and I are tired of this family squabbling—it's been going on for years.

BRIGNOL. Is it my fault? It was Valpierre who broke with us, I have no idea what about.

MME. BRIGNOL. Oh!

BRIGNOL. Oh, yes, now I remember: a miserable few hundred francs he lent me, and which I didn't exactly return.

MME. BRIGNOL. That is, didn't return at all.

BRIGNOL. Relatives oughtn't to quarrel about things of that sort. If he had borrowed money of

me and failed to return it, I shouldn't have quarreled with him. I'm sure it's because his wife doesn't like us.

MME. BRIGNOL. And because of your behavior toward them!

BRIGNOL. I shan't hold it against them.

(*Enter M. and MME. VALPIERRE.*)

BRIGNOL. How are you, my dear Valpierre? Ah, my dear! How good of you to come! I'm so glad to see you!

VALPIERRE. (*Embarrassed*) My dear Brignol—

BRIGNOL. You don't look a day older. What a life you lead in the provinces! How peaceful! No news from Poitiers, eh?

MME. VALPIERRE. Nothing much.

BRIGNOL. (*Going to VALPIERRE*) I confess I was in the wrong! There, are you satisfied? We'll settle the account in the near future, I promise.

MME. VALPIERRE. You were not only *in* the wrong, you were altogether wrong.

BRIGNOL. Altogether—I admit it.

MME. VALPIERRE. And we weren't in the least wrong. That must be clear.

BRIGNOL. It is, without the shadow of a doubt. And now, let us forget the past. Families shouldn't quarrel! It's possible to stop seeing one another, but to break off—! You'll dine with us, won't you?

MME. BRIGNOL. Oh, yes, you must.

BRIGNOL. (*To MME. VALPIERRE*) You have no idea how sorry I was not to see any more of you, and how deeply I regretted our misunderstanding. (*He shakes hands with her*)

MME. VALPIERRE. It would never have hap-

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pened if you had left Poitiers under the proper conditions.

BRIGNOL. I left Poitiers under very normal conditions. It happens every day that people leave the provinces to come to live in Paris.

VALPIERRE. You did not leave Poitiers under normal conditions, allow me to suggest. You left it head over heels in debt, with fifty creditors after you.

MME. VALPIERRE. Who came even to us!

BRIGNOL. You should have sent them to Paris: I left an address.

VALPIERRE. If it had not been for my connections and my influence, your name would have been struck from the official list of lawyers—you, the brother-in-law of a magistrate! It would have been a terrible dishonor!

MME. BRIGNOL. Now, now!

VALPIERRE. You resigned, and I must say it was about time.

BRIGNOL. (*Rising*) I never wanted to practice: my legal career is over.

VALPIERRE. And the disgraceful scenes you had with your creditors, even in the streets! It is possible that such things are of no importance at Paris, but at Poitiers, they are disgraceful—do you hear?

MME. VALPIERRE. They reflect on the whole family.

BRIGNOL. (*To VALPIERRE*) That's an exaggeration. (*To MME. VALPIERRE*) Adolphe, dear, has always exaggerated; that has invariably been the source of our arguments.

VALPIERRE. (*Rising*) I never exaggerate.

MME. BRIGNOL. We have agreed to forget everything, haven't we?

VALPIERRE. I ask nothing better. It's precisely what I am going to do. I simply wanted to remind your husband that if we have not been on speaking

terms for so long, there were good reasons. I am not the sort of high-strung and sensitive person to be offended by a chance word. Brignol must certainly have overstepped the limits a long way to force us to resort to extreme measures.

BRIGNOL. Good!

VALPIERRE. When, a few months after your marriage, you risked your wife's dowry in a ridiculous speculation, and lost every sou of it, I did everything in my power to get you out of trouble.

BRIGNOL. True, every word!

VALPIERRE. Bear in mind also that I did not oppose your marriage with my sister, a marriage which was perfectly absurd, as you had no income. You have nothing therefore to reproach yourself with.

MME. VALPIERRE. If you had only followed my advice about your daughter's education—! It was very wrong of you not to have Cécile take a teacher's degree, as I was telling your wife. It's something for girls with incomes to fall back on. But no, her education has been haphazard. Cécile is nearly twenty, and she can't even teach!

(Enter CECILE at the back, laughing.)

CÉCILE. I heard everything, Aunt.

MME. VALPIERRE. There is nothing to laugh about.

CECILE. Now, really, I can read and write and add. Anyway, some day we'll be rich: Papa's promised we shall, a hundred times!

BRIGNOL. And I promise once again.

CECILE. I'm counting on it absolutely.

BRIGNOL. That's the way to look at things!

VALPIERRE. Meantime, creditors throng about your front-door. That must be pleasant for the ladies?

CECILE. It's not unpleasant, at any rate. I do wonders with Papa's creditors. When I hear them making a scene, I quietly open the office door, as if I wanted to ask him something. The tempest subsides.

BRIGNOL. (*Laughing*) It always works.

VALPIERRE. I can well believe it.—Now, leave us, child. (*To BRIGNOL*) With your permission, we are going to have a serious talk.

MME. BRIGNOL. Please don't be too hard on him.

VALPIERRE. Hard? I'm not.

MME. VALPIERRE. We simply want to propose a plan.

CECILE. (*To MME. BRIGNOL*) A nice little lecture for Papa. Come, we're in the way. (*She goes out, left, with her mother*)

VALPIERRE. Come now, what do you intend to do?

BRIGNOL. This evening?

VALPIERRE. No: generally speaking. What are you going to do toward getting yourself and family out of this regrettable situation?

BRIGNOL. What situation?

VALPIERRE. Yours.

BRIGNOL. But my situation is not in the least regrettable: it is splendid. We happen to be a little hard-pressed for the time being, I must admit, but who isn't—from time to time?

VALPIERRE. You owe money to the landlord, my sister tells me. You may have your furniture seized any day; you have any number of creditors——

BRIGNOL. It's troublesome, of course, but not serious. In Paris there are a hundred and fifty thousand people who are exactly in the same situation. In the provinces, too.

MME. VALPIERRE. Oh, oh!

BRIGNOL. Are there no debtors in the provinces?

MME. VALPIERRE. No—the moment a man is in debt, he is obliged to go to Paris.

VALPIERRE. Now listen to me, Brignol: (*Taking BRIGNOL's hand*) I am ready to help you. I have done so already and I shall willingly do so again, if you will turn over a new leaf—seriously.

BRIGNOL. How do you mean?

VALPIERRE. You must work, accept a position in an office—anywhere. I'll take care of your creditors; we'll arrange that in time.

MME. VALPIERRE. There's the proposal my husband wanted to make to you. I think it very reasonable.

BRIGNOL. In an office, at my age! You're not serious? My talents can be exercised only in large and important transactions, where my experience can be utilized.

VALPIERRE. At your age? Well, well! (*Looking at BRIGNOL*) You might pass for forty! You look fifteen years younger than I, and yet we're the same age. Are you ever sick?

BRIGNOL. Never.

VALPIERRE. Have you rheumatism?

BRIGNOL. Not a trace.

VALPIERRE. I have—in every bone of my body. I've grown old, you look like a young man. That's what you get for living as you do! It's discouraging! Then you intend to go on doing nothing at all? Please yourself.

BRIGNOL. You're mistaken: I have fifty irons in the fire. If one turns out successfully, we're saved, rich. Meantime, I have my clients—do you know Carriard?

VALPIERRE. Who is the gentleman?

BRIGNOL. A man who was the occasion of my making five hundred francs last month. You're going to meet him to-night at dinner. I'll probably get a superb position in his factory, or something

in that new railway system he's going to build—not to mention the newspaper he's going to found, and which I shall manage.

VALPIERRE. Is *he* all your clients?

BRIGNOL. Did you ever hear of Commandant Brunet?

VALPIERRE. Commandant Brunet of Poitiers? I know him intimately.

BRIGNOL. (*Embarrassed*) Ah, you know him—Well, you see, my situation is not so bad.

VALPIERRE. Is the Commandant one of your clients?

BRIGNOL. Oh, yes.

VALPIERRE. But he's ruined——lost every sou gambling.

BRIGNOL. I beg your pardon: the Commandant is not ruined. In short, my dear fellow——

VALPIERRE. Yes, I seem to remember the story. He came into a little fortune two years ago, didn't he?

BRIGNOL. Yes.

VALPIERRE. He won a case in Poitiers?

BRIGNOL. Yes.

VALPIERRE. Didn't he lose that money at bac-cara?

BRIGNOL. He doesn't gamble any longer.

VALPIERRE. Do you see him often?

BRIGNOL. Quite often.

VALPIERRE. He's a decent enough fellow; I'd like to see him again.

BRIGNOL. Indeed?

VALPIERRE. Where does he live?

BRIGNOL. (*Preoccupied*) The Commandant? Hm! I have his address in one of these drawers. I'll give it to you.

VALPIERRE. (*After a pause*) I wonder what sort of dealings you can have with the Com-mandant?

BRIGNOL. When I spoke of him, I merely wanted to mention another of my clients: I have others, too. It's not so much resources that I lack. You think everything is lost because I'm three terms behind with the rent, and have a few other unsettled accounts. But it's most exceptional in Paris when a man is not one or two terms in arrears. It's of no consequence.

VALPIERRE. Where can you get the necessary money?

BRIGNOL. I don't know, but I'll find it. The important point is to have the money; I must and *will* have it. Why, twenty times I've been in the same position, and at the last moment I've always come out on top.

VALPIERRE. Do you know what I think? A day will come when you can't find the money, and then you will be definitely compromised. (BRIGNOL *shrugs his shoulders*) It's almost happened two or three times already.

BRIGNOL. With me?

MME. VALPIERRE. How about that diamond business at Tours?

BRIGNOL. There was nothing to that.

MME. VALPIERRE. And the champagne affair?

BRIGNOL. Trifles. No one remembers anything about it. It all comes out right in the end—everything always does.

VALPIERRE. You'll see where these ideas lead you!

BRIGNOL. Do you think me an ambitious man who wants to make millions, like a great financier? Now, what do I ask? I want only a hundred thousand francs for Cécile's dowry, and to be able to retire to the country with ten thousand francs' income.

VALPIERRE. (*Jokingly*) Very modest!

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BRIGNOL. I can make that money here in Paris, but I can't at Poitiers.

VALPIERRE. (*By the desk*) But, my dear man, I haven't that much money myself, I who have been a magistrate for thirty years! Now, do you mean to say *you* can make it at a single stroke?

BRIGNOL. I do. Do you remember one day when I asked you to lend me twenty thousand francs, and you refused?

VALPIERRE. I do!

BRIGNOL. My dear fellow, if you had let me have that money, I should not only have paid you back with interest, in a year's time, but I should at this moment have been richer than you.

VALPIERRE. Really, now!

BRIGNOL. It was bound to succeed.

MME. VALPIERRE. And you think it kind and natural to make more money than Adolphe, who has worked so hard for thirty long years? I'm very glad he didn't lend you the money!

(*Voices heard outside.*)

BRIGNOL. What's that?—(*He listens at the door*)

CECILE. (*Outside*) I tell you, he isn't at home!

VALPIERRE. What!

BRIGNOL. Sh!—Ah, he's gone!

VALPIERRE. Another creditor? Scandalous!

(*Enter CECILE.*)

BRIGNOL. Who was it?

CECILE. A Monsieur Vignon. He belongs to your club.

BRIGNOL. What did he want?

CECILE. (*Smiling*) Well——

BRIGNOL. He's gone now, isn't he?

CECILE. Not exactly: he's on the sidewalk, wait-

ing for you. He's watching till you come back——

BRIGNOL. On the sidewalk? What impudence!

MME. VALPIERRE. This is charming!

BRIGNOL. I'm going to talk to him; he's getting a little troublesome. (*He goes out*)

MME. VALPIERRE. (*To CECILE, who is laughing*) You think it's funny?

CECILE. (*Stops laughing*) Very!

MME. VALPIERRE. And this happens every day?

CECILE. Nearly every day.

VALPIERRE. (*Losing his temper*) And your mother is willing to put up with it all?

CECILE. What ought she to do?

VALPIERRE. Don't you mind? Aren't you tired of it?

CECILE. We are used to it.

VALPIERRE. Don't you dread having to face this all your life?

CECILE. Papa says it won't last much longer.

MME. VALPIERRE. It will never end! It can't!

CECILE. Well, if it can't, then it's high time I got used to it.

MME. VALPIERRE. It's outrageous, the whole thing!

CECILE. But, my dear Aunt, you know I'd rather have Papa rich, and I'd like to be rid of all this trouble! I'd like to have horses and carriages and a country house, and lead that sort of life. But you said just now that that could never be?

VALPIERRE. I fear it can't!

CECILE. Then, my dear Uncle, I see nothing else but to continue as we are.

VALPIERRE. (*Walking back and forth, stamping*) If you'd only gone into teaching, as I advised a hundred times, you would not have had to witness these disgraceful scenes.

CECILE. Yes, but it's too late now. I am not a teacher: I'm good for nothing at all. We have no

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money, and Papa is in debt. So I'm forced to do my share.

VALPIERRE. If your father had never left Poitiers!

CECILE. But he did. What can you do about it?

VALPIERRE. If he hadn't been so foolish! If he'd been only a little more prudent! If—if—he might have been a regular lawyer; he argues well. He might have had a position in the world!

CECILE. (*Irritably*) If—if—if! But he isn't! I'm sorry, but it can't be helped!

VALPIERRE. But how will it all end, my poor girl?

CECILE. We'll know later. Auntie, come and see Papa talking to his creditors, on the sidewalk. It's so funny! (*She goes out with MME. VALPIERRE, who exhibits signs of discouragement*)

VALPIERRE. This is going to end badly. (*Enter the COMMANDANT*) Monsieur! (*Recognizing him*) Well! It's you, Commandant?

COMMANDANT. Valpierre! Oh, yes, you are a relative of Brignol, aren't you?

VALPIERRE. His brother-in-law.

COMMANDANT. Yes. It's so long since I left Poitiers, that I forgot it. I've just seen Brignol on the sidewalk. He told me to come in.

VALPIERRE. He'll be back soon. You never come back to Poitiers any more?

COMMANDANT. Very rarely. I used to hunt with my nephew, who has an estate near there.

VALPIERRE. Next to my own. I've heard that you had business relations with my brother-in-law; I am very glad. He was speaking of you not a minute ago.

COMMANDANT. I like him immensely.

VALPIERRE. So you have business dealings with him?

COMMANDANT. Yes. He's been of great service to me in my suit.

VALPIERRE. Indeed? And you're definitely settled in Paris?

COMMANDANT. Just about. Ah, I understand you, Valpierre; I know I didn't leave a very savory reputation behind me in Poitiers—is that what you mean?

VALPIERRE. But no one questions your honor, Commandant.

COMMANDANT. Yet I am said to affect the gaming tables and to lead the life of a regular clubman.

VALPIERRE. You are chiefly pitied because you've lost your fortune. Your private life, Commandant, in spite of that one foible, is above reproach. Only it cannot but cause your friends pain to see a man of your position fall among people of doubtful standing, spend your nights playing cards, reduced to a miserly income, after squandering some hundreds of thousands of francs. How did it happen that you, Commandant, who would have preferred suicide a hundred times to the slightest suspicion of—of indelicacy——?

COMMANDANT. (*Touched*) Thank you, Valpierre! You have a better opinion of me than I deserve; I've come to know myself. Assuredly I do not believe myself capable of committing an indelicacy, but it might be said that later on I should——

VALPIERRE. Nonsense!

COMMANDANT. Everything is possible in gambling! Everything! But, thank God, I'm not that low yet!

VALPIERRE. But didn't I understand Brignol to say that you had given up gambling?

COMMANDANT. As a matter of fact, during the past eighteen months I've played only two insignifi-

cant little games: Chinese bésigue and piquet. I'm so much better since I've given up baccara.

VALPIERRE. Then—?

COMMANDANT. Don't congratulate me; I'm going to begin again to-day.

VALPIERRE. That's bad, Commandant, very bad.

COMMANDANT. I hoped that since I stopped playing, my vein of bad luck has come to an end. Do you know d'Alembert's system?

VALPIERRE. No.

COMMANDANT. (*Shrugging his shoulders*) It is said to be an excellent one.

VALPIERRE. My poor friend! Don't you ever win?

COMMANDANT. No, never.

VALPIERRE. Well, old soldiers never win at baccara.

COMMANDANT. True. You've noticed it, too?

VALPIERRE. I haven't only it's a well-known fact.

COMMANDANT. Well-known, but still I keep on playing! Don't *you* ever play? As a general rule, magistrates are lucky.

VALPIERRE. Ah?

COMMANDANT. I beg your pardon, Valpierre! I'm a fool, I see nothing but the card-tables all about me. I'll die poor, I know. Now, there's one man who almost saved me from this stupid vice: your brother-in-law Brignol.

VALPIERRE. Brignol?

COMMANDANT. My friend, your brother-in-law is a wonderful man. He has a genius for business—he'll make a fortune some day. Did I tell you I had thirty thousand francs left over from what I won in that case? It was my last resource; I owe it to Brignol for having saved that at least from baccara.

VALPIERRE. Ah!

COMMANDANT. Or for having prevented my

going into those idiotic speculations floated by the swindlers who hang about clubs. My dear fellow, when they learned that I had that thirty thousand francs, you should have heard the suggestions I got as to how to invest it! There was what d'ye call 'em—of the Bourse, promised me an income of twenty thousand.

VALPIERRE. The devil!

COMMANDANT. Brignol was fair and square. He said: "You will be very lucky if those thirty thousand francs bring you six per cent. They can, however, do that, in the right hands. Give them to me."

VALPIERRE. (*Quickly*) And you did?

COMMANDANT. Eighteen months ago. We did a little speculating, and I made two thousand francs—pocket-money.

VALPIERRE. Very good.

COMMANDANT. But, alas, my good resolutions have gone. I resisted as long as I could; now I must try my luck again, and I've come for my money. You can imagine how afraid I've been since this morning! I know how it will hurt his feelings.

VALPIERRE. Yes—indeed it will!

COMMANDANT. I'm ashamed, but Fate has overmastered me. I dream of baccara at night, I wake up suddenly as from a nightmare. It's worse for the nerves than actually playing.

VALPIERRE. You don't lose so much.

COMMANDANT. Oh, my fate is already sealed in advance, so that I have nothing to worry about. I have the pleasure of seeing you again during your

BRIGNOL. I beg your pardon, Commandant.

(*Enter BRIGNOL.*)

COMMANDANT. (*To VALPIERRE*) I hope I shall stay at Paris?

know I'll die in poverty, unless I beg from my rich
VALPIERRE. I hope so. Au revoir. (*He looks at out*)

BRIGNOL, *who turns his head away, then he goes*
nephew. Ah, here is Brignol.

BRIGNOL. Commandant, what can I do for you?

COMMANDANT. (*Hesitating*) Oh, no——
It's nothing serious that brings you, is it?

BRIGNOL. The end of the season looks bright;
if this keeps up, you'll have a neat little sum.

COMMANDANT. Thank you, Brignol, thank you!
I shall never forget what you have done for me.

BRIGNOL. It's really nothing—only natural.
Another man in my place would perhaps have
given you a little more money at first; he would
have ended by squandering your thirty thousand
francs in some wild-cat speculation, and you would
never have seen your money again. I prefer to give
you less, and risk nothing. (*Pointing to the safe*)
Your little capital lies there, in good bonds. If the
chance of a safe investment comes to my notice, you
may be sure I shall not let it slip.

COMMANDANT. (*Going toward the safe*) You
say my bonds are there?

BRIGNOL. In business it has always been a rule
of mine to be very prudent and careful.

COMMANDANT. (*Walks back and forth, hesi-
tates, then comes to* BRIGNOL, *and says, piteously*)
Brignol, you see before you the biggest fool in Paris.

BRIGNOL. What's this?

COMMANDANT. My friend, I'm incurable.

BRIGNOL. Are you sick?

COMMANDANT. The fever!

BRIGNOL. (*Quickly*) Do you mean to gamble
again? But, you poor——!

COMMANDANT. Don't blame me, Brignol, please
don't! I know I'm fated to lose all and die in pov-
erty. You have done all a man could to save

me from this catastrophe. I'll never forget your kindness.

BRIGNOL. My dear Commandant, you *are* out of your mind! You who have not touched a card for a year and a half!

COMMANDANT. I've not once played baccara, that is true. I've played only children's games, like bésigue. Well, I was always able to lose a fair amount of money. Last month I figured up how much Chinese bésigue cost me: four hundred francs. The day before yesterday, I lost over a hundred playing manille with some Southerners. It was awful luck! Everybody wins at those games! Then I said to myself: "I might just as well return to baccara. I have at least a chance to win back something there." Here's my receipt: give me my bonds, and don't trouble with me any longer—I don't deserve it.

BRIGNOL. Then you want to gamble again at once?

COMMANDANT. To-night, after dinner. The rare occasions on which I do win are always after dinner.

BRIGNOL. You'll lose a good deal if you sell your bonds at once.

COMMANDANT. I don't care.

BRIGNOL. (*Pointing to the calendar*) Go back to gambling on a Friday, after so long an interval!

COMMANDANT. I am not superstitious. I even feel that Friday will bring me luck.

BRIGNOL. (*Taking out his watch*) Sell bonds at this hour!? Unheard of!

COMMANDANT. The sooner the better. If I'm in a hurry, Brignol, it's because I've firmly resolved not to make a botch of everything, as I've done before. I've studied a system which I'm going to

follow to the letter. (BRIGNOL *shrugs his shoulders*) Do you know D'Alembert's System?

BRIGNOL. (*Confidently*) One of the worst on earth! In three weeks you won't have a centime to your name.

COMMANDANT. (*Resolutely*) Perhaps.

BRIGNOL. I know.

COMMANDANT. Don't make me feel sorry, my friend. I've begun now and I can't stop: it's too late. I'd go into a decline if I were delayed for a single day. Take your receipt, and make up your mind that I'm an ungrateful good-for-nothing. (*Both gradually move toward the safe*)

BRIGNOL. How much do you need to begin with?

COMMANDANT. Listen to me, Brignol, if I risk what I have, sou by sou, I'll have no way of defending myself. I'm going to put all my eggs in one basket, and trust in the Lord!

BRIGNOL. (*Mopping his brow*) Do you want it all? (*The COMMANDANT bows "yes"*) Very well, Commandant, I've done my duty. (*He sits at his desk and writes*) You'll have it to-morrow or the day after; I must have time for the necessary negotiations.

COMMANDANT. I'll attend to that. Bonds or railway stock are as good as ready-money. The chief point is not to have time to think it over; the moment I decide to do something foolish, I must do it. I should have been dreadfully disappointed if you hadn't my bonds right here. But I'm hopeful; I believe I'll win this time!

BRIGNOL. (*A little pale*) To-morrow, then?

COMMANDANT. But why to-morrow, Brignol? Let's get it over with at once.

BRIGNOL. The devil! You are in a hurry! There are certain formalities!

COMMANDANT. What? But if my money is there——

BRIGNOL. It is—that is to say, its equivalent—
(*Stammering*) You see, I must exchange——

COMMANDANT. Exchange what? You have them there! Here's my receipt, now give me my bonds. I'm willing to lose on the exchange—it's quite simple, you see.

BRIGNOL. You understand nothing whatever about business, Commandant. Happy man! You see, I haven't your bonds actually in the safe, but I repeat, I have their equivalent. It is quite out of the question for you to have them for some hours.

COMMANDANT. (*Annoyed*) Isn't my money there in the safe? I thought it was; you just told me so.

BRIGNOL. Merely a technical expression.

COMMANDANT. So I must wait until to-morrow? Noon?

BRIGNOL. Four o'clock.

COMMANDANT. Four o'clock. You have no idea how you upset my plans. Well, I think I can arrange for to-morrow at four——

BRIGNOL. That's it.

COMMANDANT. There'll be no delay? You don't foresee any complications?

BRIGNOL. (*After a moment he takes the COMMANDANT'S arm*) Ah, Commandant! Do you know how you could do me a great favor? Don't begin gambling again for some days!

COMMANDANT. Never, Brignol! No, no, no. Please don't insist.

BRIGNOL. You'd be doing me an immense favor, Commandant.

COMMANDANT. In what way?

BRIGNOL. (*In an undertone*) I am going to tell you something I would tell no one else, for I know you are incapable of harboring a base thought. (*The COMMANDANT looks steadfastly at BRIGNOL*) I need a few days in which to sell your bonds. I

had no idea you were going to call for your money without warning me; you see, I placed them in an absolutely safe concern.

COMMANDANT. A few days!

BRIGNOL. Only two weeks.

COMMANDANT. Well, I'm damned! This is bothersome! An absolutely safe concern? What?

BRIGNOL. Don't worry, you'll have your money in two weeks.

COMMANDANT. I tell you I *do* worry, a great deal! You have no right to speculate with my money without consulting me. That agreement is in my receipt.

BRIGNOL. How was I to know beforehand——?

COMMANDANT. Now let us be serious for a moment. (*He puts his hand on BRIGNOL'S shoulder*) What have you done with my thirty thousand francs?

BRIGNOL. Commandant, you shall have your money two weeks from to-morrow. You don't think me a swindler, do you?

COMMANDANT. No!

BRIGNOL. My word of honor: two weeks from to-morrow. You have my receipt: it will be as good then as it is to-day.

COMMANDANT. Two weeks!

BRIGNOL. You're simply wonderful, Commandant! (*He offers his hand; the COMMANDANT takes it coldly*)

COMMANDANT. And I had such faith in you! When you said, "Your bonds are in the safe," I thought I actually had them.

BRIGNOL. Nothing is changed.

COMMANDANT. This is really most unfortunate. A thing I hadn't expected, I had such faith in you, Brignol.

BRIGNOL. I hope, Commandant——?

COMMANDANT. (*Aside, not answering*) I'll consult with my nephew.

BRIGNOL. You're not angry? (*The COMMANDANT replies by a shake of the head. BRIGNOL, with a grand gesture, speaks to himself*) Evidently, I was wrong, I know it!

(*Enter CARRIARD.*)

CARRIARD. How are you, Commandant? Health good?

COMMANDANT. Excellent.

CARRIARD. Are we going to see you to-night at the club?

COMMANDANT. (*Turning round angrily*) At the club? I don't know when I'll be seen at the club! (*He goes out*)

CARRIARD. (*To BRIGNOL*) What's the matter with him?

BRIGNOL. Bad humor.

CARRIARD. Did you quarrel with him?

BRIGNOL. A misunderstanding.

CARRIARD. Ah? Serious?

BRIGNOL. No.

CARRIARD. Good!

BRIGNOL. You dine here this evening, don't forget.

CARRIARD. Delighted. Are the ladies well? Your daughter?

BRIGNOL. Splendid.

CARRIARD. I thought I should come a little early and tell you the news: I'm thinking of buying that factory I told you about not long ago.

BRIGNOL. What factory?

CARRIARD. In La Nièvre.

BRIGNOL. Good! Very glad to hear it.

CARRIARD. You seem—preoccupied?

BRIGNOL. Oh, no!

CARRIARD. You'll have your position then, Brignol. Of course, it goes without saying, you'll have to leave Paris, but the moment it's to your interest to——

BRIGNOL. That's no obstacle. There are times when I'm quite disgusted with Paris.

CARRIARD. You'll enjoy a pleasant and quiet existence there with Mme. Brignol. Two or three times a year I'll come to see you with my wife——

BRIGNOL. Your wife?

CARRIARD. Of course! Why, what's the matter with you to-day? My wife, yes: your daughter. Do I need remind you that all this is to happen when I marry your daughter? We've agreed on this.

BRIGNOL. Oh, yes, I——

CARRIARD. You remember?

BRIGNOL. Perfectly. I've not had an opportunity of speaking with her yet, nor with my wife—but of course we're agreed.

CARRIARD. Your daughter is delightful, charming, faultless. I feel a great deal of affection for her. It would really be a great disappointment if I failed to marry her.

BRIGNOL. But you understand, don't you, that you won't hold it against me in the event (which is highly improbable) of my daughter's refusing you?

CARRIARD. Of course.

BRIGNOL. She has always had her own way. I simply cannot exercise the slightest authority over her.

CARRIARD. I confess I don't expect a refusal. Your daughter has treated me very nicely so far: we're on very friendly terms. I'm not yet forty, so that our ages are not so very disproportionate——

BRIGNOL. So much the better, my friend, so much the better.

BRIGNOL AND HIS DAUGHTER 27

CARRIARD. When do you intend to speak to her?

BRIGNOL. Soon—in a few days. To-day I'm going to introduce you to my brother-in-law.

CARRIARD. Valpierre of Poitiers?

BRIGNOL. Do you know him?

CARRIARD. I know everyone!

(Enter the MAID, with visiting cards.)

BRIGNOL. *(Taking the cards)* More of them!

CARRIARD. Business?

BRIGNOL. I think so. Are you coming?

(CARRIARD goes out.)

MAID. What shall I say to the gentlemen?

BRIGNOL. Bring them in here; I shall see them in a moment. *(The MAID goes to the other door)*

MAID. Will the gentlemen please come in?

(Enter the COMMANDANT and MAURICE.)

COMMANDANT. *(To the MAID)* I hope he has not gone out?

MAID. No, Messieurs, Monsieur asks you to be good enough to wait a moment. *(She goes out)*

COMMANDANT. *(Swinging his cane)* Thirty thousand francs!

MAURICE. Why the devil didn't you tell me about this before, Uncle?

COMMANDANT. *(Shrugging his shoulders)* How could I imagine such a thing? Brignol of all men!

MAURICE. Allow me to say that you are very simple. Who is this Brignol?

COMMANDANT. He's from Poitiers—I had great faith in him.

MAURICE. You've been deceived all your life, and you always will be. There's nothing to be done.

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COMMANDANT. I had such faith in him, I tell you! Then do *you* think that Brignol——?

MAURICE. He's like the rest: speculated with your money and lost it. Don't deceive yourself. Your money is lost—irrevocably!

COMMANDANT. Irrevocably?

MAURICE. I never knew an exception!

COMMANDANT. It's my bad luck again!

MAURICE. I can't understand such blind confidence, Uncle!

COMMANDANT. It's all very well for you to talk! It's easy not to risk your fortune when you have an income of eighty or a hundred thousand francs. You have nothing to boast of! One might think you were an angel the way you talk. *I* gamble, I admit it, but you——

MAURICE. The ladies!

COMMANDANT. You gave me enough trouble in that way when I was still your guardian. Well, then——

MAURICE. I'll admit it, but you really must confess that's better than allowing yourself to be robbed by a swindler. Well, we'll try to get back something with threats, though I doubt if we'll succeed.

COMMANDANT. But what surprises me is that a fellow of good family, a lawyer— There are moments when I can't believe what's happened to me.

MAURICE. You're not the only one. (*Seeing BRIGNOL, who is about to enter*) Let me talk with him!

(*Enter BRIGNOL.*)

BRIGNOL. Messieurs! My dear Commandant.

COMMANDANT. Let's get down to business, Brignol. I've thought over your suggestion. It won't work!

MAURICE. Pease, Uncle—! (*To BRIGNOL*) Monsieur, my uncle has shown me the receipt you gave him. It's in regular form. We don't ask you to return the bonds this evening——

COMMANDANT. But——

MAURICE. No, Uncle, you cannot ask for them this evening.

BRIGNOL. Obviously.

MAURICE. We merely ask to know their exact value; we should like to see them.

BRIGNOL. (*Walking back and forth nervously*) I told the Commandant——

COMMANDANT. You told me it was a safe affair.

MAURICE. What was it?

BRIGNOL. (*Hesitating*) Just now—Commandant—we agreed that—that you should have your money in two weeks——

COMMANDANT. (*In a high voice*) No, Monsieur, we made no agreement. I want my bonds, do you hear? (*He strikes the desk with his cane*)

MAURICE. Monsieur, my uncle gives you until to-morrow noon. There is no need of my calling your attention to the gravity of the situation. If by to-morrow noon the matter is not arranged, my uncle will file suit.

COMMANDANT. Absolutely. You've behaved infamously toward me! Now what the devil am I going to do all evening?

BRIGNOL. You just told me you haven't been playing for the last year!

COMMANDANT. (*Still raising his voice and making considerable disturbance*) That's not true! I've always maintained that I wouldn't play so long as I was in bad luck; to-day that streak has passed and I must——

(*Enter CECILE.*)

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CECILE. Papa! I beg your pardon, Messieurs!
(*Aside to her father*) I heard the noise, and I've come to deliver you——

MAURICE. (*To his uncle*) Pretty, that little girl!

CECILE. (*Aside to her father*) Creditors again? Poor Papa!

BRIGNOL. (*Aside to CECILE*) Yes, but it's over now. They were just leaving.

MAURICE. (*Aside to his uncle*) Don't you know her?

COMMANDANT. Who?

MAURICE. The young lady?

COMMANDANT. What has she to do——?

MAURICE. She's charming!

CECILE. Dinner is ready; hurry up! (*To MAURICE and the COMMANDANT*) Messieurs!

MAURICE. Mademoiselle! (*She goes out*)

COMMANDANT. Let us continue, Monsieur. If by to-morrow noon——

BRIGNOL. Noon! Really, Commandant, this is absurd!

(MAURICE appears to take no interest in the conversation.)

BRIGNOL. You can have no idea how painful these suspicions are, coming from you!

COMMANDANT. Borrow from your brother-in-law.

BRIGNOL. I must have a few days——

COMMANDANT. (*To MAURICE*) What's to be done? Speak! You don't say a word!

MAURICE. What? Oh, yes. (*To BRIGNOL*) Monsieur——!

BRIGNOL. (*Going to MAURICE*) Now, Monsieur, I ask you on your honor! You are a reasonable man: is it possible that the father of a family,

a former practising lawyer, would deliberately do a dishonorable deed?

MAURICE. (*Mechanically*) No—no. Have you children?

BRIGNOL. One daughter.

MAURICE. Yes, yes.

COMMANDANT. Three days! I give you three days, no more! (*Aside to MAURICE*) Maurice, you arrange it with him yourself. I don't want to be present; I only make him angry. See you to-night.

BRIGNOL. We can arrange it quite simply and amicably, Commandant.

COMMANDANT. Three days, Monsieur!—Oh, what shall I do with those three days? (*He goes out*)

BRIGNOL. Your uncle, Monsieur, is charming. We've been doing business together for a long time; I should be very sorry to break with him. Take a chair, we'll arrange——

MAURICE. This three days' delay——?

BRIGNOL. Is enough at a pinch. I am sorry we didn't start with that; we should then have avoided much useless explanation. But the Commandant was so angry——

MAURICE. He is a bit brusque.

BRIGNOL. I'm very fond of him, but I know that the dread of not being able to play for a few days is enough to exasperate him. But I'm not at all angry. Why, if he's forced to keep from the gambling tables for some weeks, even——

MAURICE. Some weeks?

BRIGNOL. Weeks or days—little difference. (*Noticing MAURICE, who is attempting to examine the photograph of a young girl on his desk*) That's my daughter.

MAURICE. She is charming.—Well, I'll try to get you a month's delay, but I make no promise.

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BRIGNOL. He can't refuse *you*!

MAURICE. You're positive that in a month's time——?

BRIGNOL. My dear Monsieur, in a month the whole matter will be regulated. No need discussing it further. A month! Thank you, my dear Monsieur, thank you. You don't gamble, do you?

MAURICE. (*Laughing*) Never!

BRIGNOL. I clearly remember meeting your father at Poitiers, when I was still practising. He died about eighty-nine, if I remember rightly.

MAURICE. That was it.

BRIGNOL. And now you have only your uncle? What a delightful man! Too bad he has that fearful habit!

MAURICE. In that respect he is hopeless.

BRIGNOL. You have some influence over him, you ought to try and reason with him—he'll do himself great harm some day.

(VALPIERRE *puts his head through the door, and seeing people present, is about to withdraw.*)

VALPIERRE. Pardon me!

BRIGNOL. (*Quickly*) Come in, you're not in the way.

(*Enter VALPIERRE.*)

VALPIERRE. (*Aside to BRIGNOL*) Was it the Commandant who was making all that noise?

BRIGNOL. (*Aside to VALPIERRE*) Noise? What noise? (*Aloud*) My dear friend, let me introduce you to Monsieur Maurice Vernot. Commandant Brunet's nephew—my brother-in-law, Monsieur Valpierre, magistrate at Poitiers.

MAURICE. (*Bowing*) Ah!

VALPIERRE. The Commandant's nephew! Our estates are almost adjoining.

BRIGNOL. Strange you don't know each other. Valpierre, my dear Monsieur Vernot was, like myself, one of your father's friends.

VALPIERRE. Yes. He was a man of sterling merit.

BRIGNOL. A man of extraordinary gifts.

(Enter a MAID.)

MAID. Dinner is ready.

BRIGNOL. Very well. Let Madame know. *(To MAURICE, after a moment's hesitation)* I sincerely hope, Monsieur Vernot, that you will give us the pleasure of your company at dinner this evening?

MAURICE. Too good of you, Monsiur—really, quite out of the question!

BRIGNOL. My brother-in-law would deem it a special favor.

VALPIERRE. Please, Monsieur!

BRIGNOL. Quite informal family gathering. *(Enter MME. BRIGNOL, CECILE, and CARRIARD)* My wife—my daughter—Monsieur Maurice Vernot, Commandant Brunet's nephew, who has done us the honor of accepting our invitation to dinner.

MAURICE. But I———

MME. BRIGNOL. It will be a pleasure, I assure you.

BRIGNOL. Come: dinner, children, dinner!

(They all go out at the back.)

Curtain

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as in the first act. As the curtain rises, MAURICE is sorting bank-notes, which he takes from his pocket-book, and gives to BRIGNOL.*

BRIGNOL. Thank you, my dear friend. I'll pay you this little sum on the——

MAURICE. Let's not discuss it. Shall we go to the theater to-night?

BRIGNOL. I believe the ladies were planning it yesterday. I'll ask them. (*Shaking hands with MAURICE*) I shan't even thank you, old man! You've been so obliging, and often—! And you've been so pleasant about it.

(*MAURICE makes a gesture of deprecation, and BRIGNOL goes out.*)

MAURICE. Now, what have I loaned him this past two weeks? Fifteen hundred the day after I came here; ten louis; to-day, three thousand. That's—hm—yes—and why? What am I doing here? Marry that delightful little girl? Impossible! Her father is a bit too—too much of a type—~~not~~ marry her? I think I'd better—travel!

(*Enter BRIGNOL and CECILE.*)

CECILE. (*To MAURICE*) How are you, Monsieur? (*They shake hands*) We are very happy to accept your kind invitation to the box-party. Thank you! It's been at least two months since we've been to the theater.

BRIGNOR. Two months! That's so. (*He sits at his desk, writing*)

MAURICE. (*In an undertone to CECILE*) I am very happy if you are pleased.

CECILE. What is the play? (*She sits down*)

MAURICE. (*After a pause*) Why do you go to the theater so seldom?

CECILE. My father is very busy.

BRIGNOL. Oh, the devil!

CECILE. He can never come with us. We live a most provincial existence.

MAURICE. Don't you ever get tired of it?

CECILE. Not very. We never go anywhere, or see anyone, and yet (I hardly know how) the time passes, and I'm not too much bored.

MAURICE. Just the other way with me.

CECILE. Do you get bored?

MAURICE. Often—not to say—er—constantly.

CECILE. Yet you seem to have a good solid character.

MAURICE. I have—I'm not sad as a rule. If I'm bored, it's because I usually associate with bores, that's all. Since I've known you, I've felt better, gayer, light-hearted—

CECILE. Good! Will you come often to see us?

MAURICE. I should think so! I'm not a bore?

CECILE. Of course not! My mother has taken quite a fancy to you.

BRIGNOL. (*Continuing work at his desk*) Think of it, the landlord actually fined me!

(*Enter the MAID.*)

MAID. A letter for Monsieur.

MAURICE. (*In an undertone*) Only—hm—if I come to see you, do you know what will happen?

CECILE. No. What?

MAURICE. I'll fall in love with you!

CECILE. Monsieur!

MAURICE. (*Almost in a whisper*) I love you—I love you!

BRIGNOL. (*Tapping on a letter*) Oh, no! People don't really write that sort of letter!

MAURICE. What's the trouble?

BRIGNOL. A letter from the Commandnat. (*To CECILE*) Leave us, dear.

MAURICE. Mademoiselle!

CECILE. Monsieur! (*She goes out*)

MAURICE. What does he say?

BRIGNOL. (*Reading*) "Monsieur, the limit of the latest delay which I was kind enough to allow you is more than past; I shall be at your office at three o'clock to-day, and if I fail to receive my money, I shall sue you for embezzlement. Commandant Brunet."—Embezzlement? The devil! That's a bit strong!

MAURICE. (*Taking the letter and reading it, as he shakes his head*) Really!

BRIGNOL. Haven't you seen your uncle?

MAURICE. Oh, yes. I advised him to be patient. I told him you would pay him soon.

BRIGNOL. The month isn't nearly up.

MAURICE. He promised me he would wait. I'll try to see him once more. (*Looking at his watch*) He ought to be home now.

(*Enter VALPIERRE and MME. BRIGNOL.*)

BRIGNOL. (*Aside to MAURICE*) Good, go and see him. This is very kind of you; I'm sorry to make you all this trouble. But I'd like to see the affair settled as soon as possible.

MAURICE. That would be better.

BRIGNOL. Much better!

MAURICE. (*To MME. BRIGNOL*) Madame!
(*To VALPIERRE*) Monsieur!

MME. BRIGNOL. (*To BRIGNOL, who is about to conduct MAURICE out*) We've just done our errands. Adolphe has decided to leave to-morrow.

BRIGNOL. (*Troubled*) Why to-morrow?

VALPIERRE. We must get back to Poitiers.

MAURICE. Good-bye, Monsieur.

VALPIERRE. Good-bye to you, Monsieur.

BRIGNOL. Just wait a moment for me. (*He goes out with MAURICE*)

MME. BRIGNOL. Why are you going so soon? You intended to stay in Paris a month? What's happened? Why must you go now?

VALPIERRE. I don't have to go.

MME. BRIGNOL. Well then?

VALPIERRE. Shall I tell you the truth? I'm going because I don't like being mixed up in these goings-on of your husband. He'll come to some bad end one of these days, I'm telling you. (*A gesture from MME. BRIGNOL*) You can never tell just where you stand with that man. He's so—uncertain—he does things—! You're not sure with him. You're his wife; tell me, do you ever understand what he's doing?

MME. BRIGNOL. He's not bad, I know that. Is it really his fault if we happen to be in so unfortunate a situation?

VALPIERRE. Altogether his fault. There was no reason why you should not have enjoyed the most honorable position in life. Brignol was the only black sheep in the family.

MME. BRIGNOL. Sometimes I imagine it's his bad luck; he has no glaring faults.

VALPIERRE. It would be much better if he had—even vices. Vices are known qualities, they can be classified, dealt with; people with good sound vices can be handled. Your husband is slippery, amorphous: he has no character, good or bad. I maintain he is capable of committing the most

dangerous acts, perhaps even without intending them. For instance: there is a man, I suspect—I am positive—with whom you ought to be on bad terms: Commandant Brunet's nephew. I know what I'm saying! Well, you are most friendly with him, he even visits you! And why? How does it happen? I don't know, and that's what is so aggravating about Brignol. Leaving aside the fact that his presence here is likely to be very compromising to Cécile—and I tell you, such a thing in Poitiers—!

MME. BRIGNOL. Oh, there's nothing to worry about on that score! We see very little company, and here in Paris no one pays attention to a small matter like that.

VALPIERRE. My dear, in Paris, as out of it, when a young man pays too much attention to a young woman, the result is invariably the same.

MME. BRIGNOL. My husband says M. Vernot is an excellent client. Granting even that you are right, I don't dare discuss the matter with Brignol. You tell him.

VALPIERRE. I am positive it wouldn't do a particle of good!

MME. BRIGNOL. Do it for my sake. I could never make him admit he was in the wrong. I know nothing, I never knew anything. That's the way we've lived since our marriage.

VALPIERRE. I'd be glad to do you the favor, and try to clear up matters finally. Afterward, he may do as he likes.

(Enter BRIGNOL.)

MME. BRIGNOL. Please! (*She goes out*)

BRIGNOL. You've quite made up your mind to go?

VALPIERRE. Yes. Now, (*sitting on the sofa*)

we're going to have an explanation, if you please. This is the last time, as I just told your wife. I wanted to leave in peace, without meddling further. I should have avoided saying things that are—disagreeable——

BRIGNOL. Did my wife ask you to say disagreeable things to me?

VALPIERRE. Please let's not quibble, and believe me when I say that if I didn't have a niece whose interest I have at heart, I should have few business dealings with you!

BRIGNOL. I quite understand. But why "business dealings?" You always talk like a magistrate. One might think that every act in life was a crime.

VALPIERRE. Or a robbery!

BRIGNOL. That's funny. Since we've become reconciled, you continue to treat me as a malefactor. Of course, I shouldn't dream of complaining——

VALPIERRE. We'll pass over that.

BRIGNOL. What the devil, don't be so touchy! You see catastrophes everywhere. The other day, we were irreparably lost, we are steering straight for the poor-house because we were in arrears with our rent. Well, here I am, as good as new, after paying the rent!

VALPIERRE. (*Rising*) Because you have borrowed money, doubtless from M. Vernot. I am positively astonished! But then everything you do astonishes me!

BRIGNOL. And what of it? To begin with, it is merely a loan from M. Vernot—who is, I may say, a charming fellow. Indeed, if Vernot hadn't been ready, I had any number of other resources.

VALPIERRE. Then you believe that this man, whom you didn't know up to two weeks ago, is lending you money for the fun of it, to do you a favor, for the pleasure of your conversation? That

he comes here every day for your company, and takes you to the theater—?

BRIGNOL. I have known M. Vernot for a long time!

VALPIERRE. Oh!

BRIGNOL. Through his uncle.

VALPIERRE. His uncle? (*Going close to BRIGNOL*) Look me in the eye! I have spoken five minutes with the Commandant, in this place! But I shan't say anything further about that!

BRIGNOL. You may; I don't care if you know everything about it. There was merely a misunderstanding between us; those things happen frequently in business. To-day we are on the best of terms.

VALPIERRE. (*Sarcastically*) I'm delighted to hear that everything is going so smoothly! Your situation is quite secure. Only, within a month's time, let me tell you, your daughter will be compromised beyond all mending——

BRIGNOL. How? By whom?

VALPIERRE. By M. Vernot. That is enough.

BRIGNOL. Oh! How do you make it out that a young girl is compromised because a young man comes to the house?

VALPIERRE. Perhaps he's going to marry her?

BRIGNOL. (*Touching VALPIERRE'S arm*) My poor friend, don't you understand anything? Do you take me for an ass? Do you imagine I would have allowed Maurice to come here if I hadn't realized that he was the husband Cécile had set her heart on, the husband *par excellence*, just the man for us?

VALPIERRE. You're joking, aren't you?

BRIGNOL. I couldn't have found a better!

VALPIERRE. I believe that! Ha! Ha!

BRIGNOL. What's the matter?

VALPIERRE. Funny! Ha! Ha!

BRIGNOL. This marriage is no less than a stroke of genius.

VALPIERRE. Admirable! You'll bring it about in a month, eh? Ha! Ha!

BRIGNOL. What are you laughing at? Isn't Maurice a nice fellow?

VALPIERRE. (*Ironically*) Perfect!

BRIGNOL. Do you think I've taken him as the first-comer? Do you imagine I haven't made all sorts of inquiries before giving him to my daughter?

VALPIERRE. You couldn't—! Then really, you have made inquiries—? Ha! Ha!

BRIGNOL. Good family, honorable position, a hundred thousand francs a year!

VALPIERRE. Only a hundred thousand?

BRIGNOL. Perhaps more.

VALPIERRE. You are simply astounding!

BRIGNOL. He's in love with Cécile, I am positive, and besides, I like him myself. I already treat him as a member of the family.

VALPIERRE. Yes, you do!

BRIGNOL. Doesn't it seem a desirable match to you?

VALPIERRE. (*Becoming serious*) Then you're not crazy? My word of honor, there are times when I think you are—or worse. So you think that M. Vernot, with an income of a hundred thousand francs, a man who knows all about you, who has arranged God knows what compromise with the Commandant—? Let me continue! (*BRIGNOL is ill at ease; he walks away, mumbling*) A very grave matter, for which you could be sent to jail for embezzlement—Keep still! Embezzlement, I say! I've judged hundreds of cases like it. Do you imagine for one instant that that man is going to marry your daughter?

BRIGNOL. I'm positive. Why shouldn't he? Be-

cause she has no dowry? In the provinces, I know, girls without dowries don't marry, but in Paris it happens every day. I'm not going out of business: I'll get her dowry later on.

VALPIERRE. Poor fellow! It's very painful for me to tell you these things, but it's high time your eyes were opened. If you only knew what I've heard about you since I came! You have a nice reputation!

BRIGNOL. What have you heard about me? I'd like to know.

VALPIERRE. Do you want to?

BRIGNOL. Don't mind me.

VALPIERRE. Only yesterday, among a number of people you know, business men you have dealings with, someone said that you were—he didn't know I was a relative of yours, and I blushed——

BRIGNOL. (*Indifferently*) That I was a——?

VALPIERRE. A swindler, since you insist; that you made a living by underhanded transactions, shady affairs—and he cited facts.

BRIGNOL. Haphazard accusations—I pay no attention to them. The word swindler hasn't the same meaning here as in the provinces. In Paris, when someone calls a man a swindler it means absolutely nothing. It's a word in ordinary use. I don't know a person to whom the word has not been applied.

VALPIERRE. (*Turning toward BRIGNOL*) How about me?

BRIGNOL. You live in Poitiers!

VALPIERRE. Let us resume. I leave to-morrow; this is the last talk we are to have on this subject. I've warned you, and I warn you again: M. Vernot will not marry your daughter, he will——

BRIGNOL. (*Rising*) Valpierre, no joking!

VALPIERRE. I hope Cécile will know how to behave herself!

BRIGNOL. (*With dignity*) I am sure of her. She takes after her mother.

VALPIERRE. Good-bye.

BRIGNOL. I'll run in to see you at your hotel before you leave.

VALPIERRE. Just as you like. (*He goes toward the door*)

(*Enter MME. BRIGNOL and CECILE.*)

CECILE. Oh, Uncle, you're not going so soon? Stay just one more week! You promised, you know.

VALPIERRE. (*Coldly*) I am sorry, but it is impossible.

BRIGNOL. He doesn't want to. I insisted, too.

CECILE. (*Going to her uncle*) And if I insist?

VALPIERRE. Useless, dear child. I must go to-morrow night. (*He goes out, back*)

MME. BRIGNOL. He's annoyed at something, I'm sure. Have you had another dispute?

BRIGNOL. No, but it's impossible to argue reasonably with that man. It's a monomania with him: he preaches morality on every occasion. I can't stand it. (*He goes to CÉCILE and kisses her*) Let him say what he likes; we'll be rich some day.

MME. BRIGNOL. Speaking of that, he's not altogether wrong, though.

CECILE. What?

BRIGNOL. Nothing.

MME. BRIGNOL. (*Going toward him*) I beg your pardon! I'm sure Cécile has enough common-sense to allow us to speak of certain rather delicate matters in her presence.

CECILE. (*Going to her father*) What is it?

BRIGNOL. Nonsense.—Cécile, my child, I must insist that you do not allow yourself to be influenced by your uncle. Our situation just now is not serious,

but it is somewhat complicated; so that if an occasion arises whereby we can escape in a brilliant and honorable manner, it would be foolish not to make the best of it.

MME. BRIGNOL. (*Coming to them*) Dreams! You're always dreaming. I shouldn't like to see Cécile disillusioned; she is already only too prone to follow the line of least resistance.

BRIGNOL. And she is right. That's the best way to fight against bad luck. Where should I be if we all three sat down and cried over our misfortunes?

CECILE. What is it now?

BRIGNOL. So far, there's nothing definitely decided. We'll talk about it one of these days.

MME. BRIGNOL. (*Going to her husband*) We must talk about it to-day. I don't want Cécile compromised.

CECILE. I? Please, what is this mystery, Papa?

MME. BRIGNOL. (*Slowly, to her husband*) Have you any other reasons beside your usual "hopes"? Have you any real reason for believing that M. Vernot is going to ask for Cécile's hand? He comes every day, dines here, and we go to the theater together. He is thirty, Cécile is twenty; I believe what Valpierre told you ought to make you stop and consider.

BRIGNOL. Among men and women of the world, there are certain things that are taken for granted, without its being necessary to speak of them.

MME. BRIGNOL. A marriage is not a matter that is taken for granted. A young woman's hand has never been asked for except through the medium of words.

BRIGNOL. I have confidence in Maurice.

MME. BRIGNOL. But I am afraid——

CECILE. (*Rising*) Oh, why talk about it? The gentleman seems very nice, but I shouldn't con-

sider him seriously as a fiancé. If he asked for my hand, I know what I should tell him.

BRIGNOL. Of course. (*Taking his wife and daughter each by the hand*) My children, my dear children, in the name of Heaven, don't cross your bridges until you come to them. Have faith in me: everything is going beautifully; our situation is improving from day to day.

MME. BRIGNOL. You think so because you happen to have come into a little ready money. It's always been that way with you. We've been living for the last ten years as if we were about to inherit a million the next day.

BRIGNOL. That's the only way to get the million.

MME. BRIGNOL. If I didn't worry about the future any more than you did——

BRIGNOL. The day one thinks of the future, he is lost. You'll never get me to worry about the morrow. Luckily I have better things to occupy me. I promise that this marriage will take place, my child! You may count on it!

CECILE. I may count on it?

BRIGNOL. Figure of speech: I mean, it *will* take place!

CECILE. I don't care a straw whether it does or not. Remember that! Undeniably, M. Vernot is nice, and he's rich, and I have no dowry. But I'd rather be an old maid and live in poverty than win a husband, like a prize in a lottery!

BRIGNOL. (*Sitting down*) Good Lord! I might have expected these exaggerations!

CECILE. I'd rather be an actress. If the gentleman makes hard conditions, show him the door.

BRIGNOL. He's very amenable. That isn't the question, however. Everything is going very smoothly. I only ask you not to spoil it by absurd reasoning. I am as concerned for your dignity as you are yourself.

(*Enter the MAID.*)

MAID. Monsieur Carriard.

BRIGNOL. Now, children, leave me to my business. (*To the MAID*) Ask him to come in. (*The MAID follows MME. BRIGNOL and CECILE out*)

(*Enter CARRIARD.*)

CARRIARD. I've just signed——

BRIGNOL. Ah!

CARRIARD. The factory's mine!

BRIGNOL. Good.

CARRIARD. (*Slapping BRIGNOL on the shoulder*) And for you, four thousand francs a year and board and lodging. Your work is to inspect the factory. Not much to do!

BRIGNOL. Inspection? In La Nièvre?

CARRIARD. You shan't have to get up until nine in the morning.

BRIGNOL. I have got up at seven every day of my life. I have a mortal terror of laziness. But I wonder whether at my age it's wise and reasonable to begin a new career? I've never felt irresistibly drawn toward industry—to my great regret. Yes, I believe that industry should be reformed from top to bottom.

CARRIARD. Just at present that is beside the question; we are now concerned with installing you there as soon as possible. I must have someone I can count on absolutely.

BRIGNOL. How do you mean, as soon as possible?

CARRIARD. A week at the latest.

BRIGNOL. Leave here in a week? Leave my business? Just consider, Carriard——

CARRIARD. Brignol, you're not going to refuse

such a splendid offer! Your future assured, easy work——!

BRIGNOL. My friend, that is just why I object to it. The work is too easy, if you'd like to know. What I demand is a vast and complicated system, in which nothing is decided or mapped out in advance. I must not know what I have to do.

CARRIARD. Let's be serious, Brignol. I can't think for an instant that you intend to live a life of idleness after your daughter marries?

BRIGNOL. I shudder to think of it!

CARRIARD. And then we're too closely connected to be able to live together. Let us fix the date of the wedding to-night. Then you will come with me, I'll introduce you to the firm——

BRIGNOL. Hm! In La Nièvre?

CARRIARD. Aren't you ready? Tell me, Brignol. You don't have the least idea, do you, that your daughter is going to refuse me?

BRIGNOL. I see no reason—I don't think so——

CARRIARD. I feel quite certain she doesn't despise me.

BRIGNOL. You see, she is only twenty.

CARRIARD. I consider the marriage quite decided. I have your word for it—a word which cannot be retracted.

BRIGNOL. Cécile must be consulted, however: it concerns her alone.

CARRIARD. You, too.

BRIGNOL. I have already told you I should never make use of my authority——

CARRIARD. I don't wish that either, and I hope there will be no necessity for force.

BRIGNOL. (*After a pause*) Are you sure you will please my daughter, Carriard?

CARRIARD. Brignol, let's stop joking! You'll soon make me think that you are forgetting your situation. You understand what I mean, don't

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you? I am the only person who can extricate you. Speak to your daughter now. I shall return in an hour for the answer.

(*Enter MAURICE.*)

MAURICE. My dear M. Brignol, I have just come from—(*Seeing CARRIARD*) Ah, I beg your pardon! Monsieur!

CARRIARD. Monsieur! (*Aside*) The Commandant's nephew! Can it be—? See you later, Brignol!

BRIGNOL. Yes.

CARRIARD. (*Aside, as he goes out*) Ho, ho! That is a bit—! But he'll pay dear!

BRIGNOL. You've seen your uncle?

MAURICE. Yes, I've just come from his room. He's inflexible, but I've arranged a combination.

BRIGNOL. Capital! You have no idea how I wanted the whole matter over with!

MAURICE. Here it is, then. I've just drawn thirty thousand francs; I have them now. You'll give them to my uncle when he comes. We shan't say anything more about the matter. This is the easiest way out. The Commandant will never suspect.

BRIGNOL. I think, my friend, that you have found the only real solution.

MAURICE. Here's the money—my uncle will be here soon.

BRIGNOL. He'll be furious, and—(*Laughing*) Good joke on him!

MAURICE. I'll stay in the house, and wait to hear the news. (*He goes out left*)

BRIGNOL. There's the bell. It's he!—One moment! (*He puts the notes given him by MAURICE into the safe*)

(Enter the MAID, followed by the COMMANDANT.)

MAID. Commandant Brunet.

BRIGNOL. (*In a brusque manner, befitting a serious business man*) Tell him to come in! (*The MAID goes out, and the COMMANDANT enters a moment later*) Commandant, I was waiting for you. (*Pointing to a chair*) Be good enough to sit down.

COMMANDANT. Monsieur, it is understood that you are to give me my money at once. You shall not have another minute's grace.

BRIGNOL. (*Sits at his desk. The COMMANDANT sits opposite. BRIGNOL arranges papers, murmuring*) Hm—mm—Commandant Brunet, good! (*Negligently*) Still go to the Club?

COMMANDANT. Yes, Monsieur.

BRIGNOL. (*As he writes*) How is your luck?

COMMANDANT. Very bad, Monsieur.—I am waiting.

BRIGNOL. One moment—Very bad? I'm not at all surprised, with the system you use!

COMMANDANT. (*Dryly*) Best system, Monsieur. (*Rising*) That is not the question at present.

BRIGNOL. (*Handing him a slip of paper*) Be good enough to sign this. You'll have your money.

COMMANDANT. At once?

BRIGNOL. At once. (*Good-naturedly*) Rest assured that if I speak of d'Alembert's system, it is not merely idle curiosity. I take a deep interest in you, a real interest. (*During this speech he goes to the safe, takes out the notes, and fingers them*) If you had allowed me to handle your money, I should have arranged so that you would have a neat little income that would have looked very nicely in the future. But you prefer risking your last resources on an absurd system. That's

your affair, of course. I have done my duty as a friend: I have tried to postpone the crash as long as possible. You have at last demanded your money, in no uncertain terms. Here it is. I sincerely hope you will never regret having taken it out of my keeping.

COMMANDANT. (*Astonished*) Brignol, I——

BRIGNOL. My experience in business, my dear Commandant, and my high esteem for you, give me the right to say that. Now it is all over—I'll say nothing further.

COMMANDANT. I firmly believe that at base you are absolutely right, Brignol, only——

BRIGNOL. Seven—eight—fourteen—fifteen—fifteen.—Now why risk everything? That's very imprudent, I think. Try half, why not? Here's an idea, Commandant. With fifteen thousand francs you surely have enough to begin again. Then you'll still have another fifteen thousand, as a final resource. What do you say?

COMMANDANT. (*With bowed head*) No, I've made up my mind! You see, with fifteen thousand francs I can't do anything!

BRIGNOL. As you like. Here are your thirty thousand.

COMMANDANT. (*Folding the notes*) Brignol, I'm going to begin to-night. I have great confidence.

BRIGNOL. Good luck to you!

COMMANDANT. Thank you, Brignol. (*He goes a few steps toward the door, then returns*) When I've lost every sou, I'll go and live in the country with my nephew. *He's* rich—but you know him, of course. I'm told you all went to the theater together?

BRIGNOL. Charming fellow!

COMMANDANT. He never told me about his intimacy with you?

BRIGNOL. (*Importantly*) I knew his father.

COMMANDANT. Where?

BRIGNOL. At Poitiers.

COMMANDANT. (*Puzzled*) I beg your pardon—I thought—the day I came here with him—you weren't acquainted?

BRIGNOL. I had business dealings of an amicable nature with M. Vernot the elder, and that——

COMMANDANT. Yes, yes.

BRIGNOL. Since then, I have seen your nephew from time to time. Just lately, he happened to sit near us at the theater.

COMMANDANT. (*On his guard*) I see, I see. You've seen him to-day.

BRIGNOL. Your nephew?

COMMANDANT. Come, come, Brignol, I'm not an infant! You've seen my nephew to-day. I'll wager he's here now! He is! Brignol, will you be kind enough to tell him I should like to see him immediately!?

BRIGNOL. (*Aside*) Why not? I believe he's with the ladies. I'll look for him, Commandant. (*He goes out*)

COMMANDANT. Ha! I knew it—of course. To think that——!

(*Enter MAURICE.*)

MAURICE. (*Laughing*) Well, Uncle?

COMMANDANT. (*After a moment's pause*) Of course, you lent him the money?

MAURICE. No.

COMMANDANT. Listen to me: I'm not so foolish as you think. When you saw that Brignol had swindled me out of thirty thousand francs——

MAURICE. Now, now!

COMMANDANT. You used the word first!—When you saw that Brignol had swindled me out of thirty thousand francs, I thought I'd get some information

about him—I should have done that before. I've found out certain very damaging facts. I tell you, Brignol would never in the world have got that money if you hadn't lent it to him. Don't deny it.

MAURICE. And what of it? If it goes to you, it's still in the family!

COMMANDANT. Well?

MAURICE. You need have no scruples, Uncle. I've arranged it all with Brignol—he'll pay me back eventually.

COMMANDANT. I can see you're in love with that swindler's daughter. That's a nice situation! But she is pretty!

MAURICE. Yes.

COMMANDANT. But, what the devil? have you ever thought what this will all lead to? Brignol is Brignol, my boy. This is bad! It goes without saying you're not thinking of marrying Brignol's daughter?

MAURICE. (*Hesitating*) It's not a matter of——

COMMANDANT. On the other hand, Brignol's family is not so bad as Brignol himself. There is, for instance, Valpierre, a very good judge. Now I hope, Maurice, your intentions toward the young lady are honorable? A young lady is a young lady, you know—it's a serious matter.

MAURICE. The young lady in question is a serious matter!

COMMANDANT. But if you don't intend to marry her——?

MAURICE. (*Vaguely*) I hardly think I shall—I don't believe I intend to——

COMMANDANT. Then you——?

MAURICE. No, I don't say that!

COMMANDANT. Then what do you intend to do?

MAURICE. I don't know.

COMMANDANT. There's nothing else to do!

You know there's no middle way. Do you want to marry her or not?

MAURICE. I haven't the slightest idea. I *do* know that I love her.

COMMANDANT. Ridiculous! Look here, Maurice, you ought not to be so underhanded with me. I understand, I think. If you say to me, "Uncle, I love Brignol's daughter, I want to make her my wife—and I want to see him out of the way," I should then say, "Do as you like." If, on the other hand you came to me and said, "I'm running away with the little girl to-morrow," I might blame you, but I should probably forgive you. That would not be the first time such a thing happened. But what I think absurd is not to know which of the two courses you want to follow.

MAURICE. I can give you no other answer: I don't know.

COMMANDANT. And yet, under these conditions, you continue to come here day after day.

MAURICE. I'm waiting for an inspiration.

COMMANDANT. You're weak! I'm just the same way myself!

MAURICE. What do you advise, Uncle?

COMMANDANT. You ask my advice, mine? (*In despair*) You ask me, a man who never did anything that wasn't foolish, ruin his career, gamble away his fortune? Me, who always acted like an idiot? You ask me to advise you in a serious affair of this kind? That's not reasonable.

MAURICE. Then I have nothing to do but go on as before. We are going to the theater this evening; will you join us?

COMMANDANT. Never! I don't care to associate with Brignol. It's not, of course, because he borrowed money from you—I might do the same thing myself!

(*Enter BRIGNOL.*)

BRIGNOL. Will you give us the pleasure of your company, my dear Commandant?

COMMANDANT. (*Drily*) Thank you—quite impossible!

BRIGNOL. I hope we shall again have the honor!

COMMANDANT. Are you coming with me, Maurice?

MAURICE. At once. (*To BRIGNOL*) Until this evening, then!

BRIGNOL. This evening! Good-bye, old man. Good-bye, Commandant.

(*MAURICE and the COMMANDANT go out.*)

BRIGNOL. (*Rubbing his hands*) Well, well, everything running beautifully. I have only to arrange that affair of Carriard's. I must make him see that. He's a good fellow.

(*Enter CECILE.*)

CECILE. Mamma wants to know whether we're going to the Opéra-Comique to-night?

BRIGNOL. Are we going?! I should think we are going! Go and get dressed, dear—oh, now that we are alone a moment, let me advise one thing. Never look at life in its darker hues; never forget your good humor. We are now on the eve of important events, and I know a little girl who will be the happiest of women to-morrow.

CECILE. Oh! How?

BRIGNOL. The happiest of women. There is but one possible obstacle in the way of your marriage—your own desire.

CECILE. I hardly think that an obstacle.

BRIGNOL. You love Maurice, I'm sure you

do: Dearest, I am profoundly happy. Oh, by the way, what do you think about Carriard?

CECILE. (*Laughing*) About Carriard? Nothing.

BRIGNOL. Good! That's right!

(*Enter the MAID.*)

MAID. Monsieur Carriard. (*She goes out*)

(*Enter CARRIARD.*)

CARRIARD. (*Bows to CECILE, and says aside to BRIGNOL, who advances in his direction*) Have you asked——?

BRIGNOL. (*Aside to CARRIARD*) Haven't had time yet.

CARRIARD. (*Aloud*) Useless!—As Mlle. Cécile is here, I shall profit by the occasion and speak to her myself.—Mademoiselle?

BRIGNOL. (*Aside*) No, never do! (*Aloud*) Cécile, please leave me with Carriard; I have a few words to say to him.

CARRIARD. (*Going toward CECILE, who is about to leave*) It is a matter of great importance, yet quite simple: five minutes will suffice. I have had the honor, Mademoiselle, to ask your father for your hand in marriage. My proposal found favor in his eyes, and he promised to intercede on my behalf.

BRIGNOL. (*In an undertone*) Why, that isn't at all——!

CARRIARD. (*Not listening to BRIGNOL*) My sole merit is that I am a friend of your father, whose dearest wish is this union.

BRIGNOL. I have always told you, Carriard, that my daughter was quite free to choose for herself.

CARRIARD. We have cherished this thought for

some time; indeed, we were speaking of the matter only a few moments ago.

CECILE. (*Looking at her father, then at CARRIARD*) Monsieur——

BRIGNOL. The child's embarrassment is quite natural, my friend. Don't you think it would be better——?

CARRIARD. I am not so foolish as to ask for an immediate answer from Mlle. Cécile. I wish merely to state in your presence that you thoroughly approve of the marriage.

BRIGNOL. Of course, of course——

CARRIARD. I trust you will be good enough to repeat that to your daughter. Speak to her! (*Aside to BRIGNOL brusquely*) See here, are you making game of me, or not?

BRIGNOL. (*Shaking CARRIARD's hand*) My dear friend, you know how I feel toward you. I have only to ask my wife's advice.

CARRIARD. Please do so as soon as possible. (*To CECILE*) I have the greatest respect and admiration for your mother, Mademoiselle, but allow me to repeat that I have your father's formal consent.

BRIGNOL. (*Going toward CECILE; in an undertone to her*) Say anything, and get rid of him! We'll arrange later.

CECILE. Monsieur, I wish there to be no misunderstanding between us. I am flattered and deeply obliged by your proposal——

BRIGNOL. Good.

CECILE. But I am incapable of hypocrisy.

BRIGNOL. Of course.

CECILE. I think this marriage out of the question.

BRIGNOL. Ah!

CARRIARD. (*Meaningly, to BRIGNOL*) Oh! Oh!

BRIGNOL. My daughter means that perhaps——

under the circumstances—but later, possibly——

CECILE. I beg your pardon! Let me say once more that I am highly flattered and touched, but I am not thinking of marrying at present.

CARRIARD. Then you definitely refuse?

BRIGNOL. Oh, not at all!

CARRIARD. I am speaking to Mademoiselle.

CECILE. Yes, definitely, Monsieur. I am deeply obliged, however——

CARRIARD. (*To BRIGNOL*) You *have* played me a trick——!

BRIGNOL. Is it my fault?

CARRIARD. You're a swindler!

BRIGNOL. Carriard, my friend, you are forgetting yourself.

CECILE. I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but I can't allow you to speak that way in my presence. I am going.

CARRIARD. I assure you, Mademoiselle, it is to your interest to listen to me. (*To BRIGNOL*) My dear friend, you're not mean at bottom, and I must confess I had rather expected this. Young Vernot would certainly prove a more suitable son-in-law than I—I don't deny it—and I thoroughly approve of your efforts to bring him here. Only—and I call your attention to this fact, Mademoiselle,—you must be out of your mind to believe that M. Vernot would marry the daughter of a man who has committed a veritable——

BRIGNOL. Here! What's this?

CARRIARD. The Commandant has told it everywhere. He's going to take the matter into the courts.

BRIGNOL. I'm a busy man, and I can't listen to all this nonsense. Yet I take the liberty of informing you, if you care to know, that I don't owe a single sou to the Commandant.

CARRIARD. That's not true.

BRIGNOL. Not true? Here is the receipt!

CARRIARD. Ha! Ha! Well, if you can find money so easily, you can pay me what you owe me, and we'll call matters square. Vernot lent you enough to pay the Commandant, he will lend you enough to pay me. Mademoiselle, I have the honor to bid you good-day. (*He goes out*)

BRIGNOL. I was quite mistaken about that man!

CECILE. Was there any truth in what he said? You might at least tell me, I'm not a child. Has M. Vernot really helped you out?

BRIGNOL. That is not the question. What I am surprised at is the way he twists things around to his own ends. If there'd been a witness at this last scene, I might have been taken for a common thief! Such are the tribulations of business men! (*Looking at his watch*) Now go and dress, dear. You've not forgotten we're going to the theater? I tell you, I'll enjoy a little recreation of the sort!

CECILE. To the theater! You don't imagine I'm going to the theater with that gentleman——?

BRIGNOL. What gentleman? Maurice? I hope, Cécile, you're not allowing yourself to be influenced by those ridiculous things. Take my word for it if I have been a bit careless in certain transactions, I've never done a really dishonest deed!

CECILE. Oh, Papa, do I doubt you? And then, that doesn't concern me. But I believe I had better not be seen in M. Vernot's company; it would be——

BRIGNOL. But why, why?

CECILE. Why? Because I don't want him to think me a little intriguing woman, or worse!

BRIGNOL. Nonsense!

CECILE. (*To herself*) He is rich! Have I thought of that? He must believe I know everything? What must he have thought of me? Yet he goes right ahead! Oh!

BRIGNOL. Goes right ahead? What do you mean?

CECILE. I mean that only an hour ago—he spoke to me—he—he told me in so many words that he loved me——!

BRIGNOL. A proposal!

CECILE. Well!—But he never really seriously thought of marrying me! Now I understand. Never, do you hear! It's as clear as day! Never!

BRIGNOL. If that is true, I should never think of allowing him——!

CECILE. Oh!

BRIGNOL. He'll have to deal with me!

CECILE. There's no use in——!

BRIGNOL. I don't care if I do owe him money! Dear little Cécile, dearest, don't blame me, please don't!

CECILE. How could I ever blame you for anything? Poor Papa! Well, I always thought I should be an old maid! (*She goes out*)

BRIGNOL. I'll think of something!

Curtain

ACT III

SCENE: *Same as in the preceding acts. MADAME BRIGNOL and CECILE are present.*

MME. BRIGNOL. Have you told your father everything?

CECILE. Yes. You knew, didn't you, that M. Vernot had lent us money?

MME. BRIGNOL. Your father did not say so; he doesn't say much, but I guessed.

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CECILE. When I think that that young man believed——!

MME. BRIGNOL. You mustn't take it too much to heart, dear. While we're in this uncertain situation we're so exposed to catastrophes! I think it's a miracle nothing has happened these past twenty years.

CECILE. Well?

MME. BRIGNOL. (*After a pause*) You love him, don't you?

CECILE. That isn't the question.

MME. BRIGNOL. Poor child!

CECILE. It—it isn't easy to resign myself! The humiliation——!

MME. BRIGNOL. Shall I have your aunt take you to the country with her—for three or four months? Until the fall?

CECILE. Yes, please! That's a splendid idea!

MME. BRIGNOL. She'll be here any moment.

CECILE. Splendid—from now until we go——

MME. BRIGNOL. Your father must find what he calls "some sort of combination." If he doesn't, I will.

CECILE. If he'll only consent——

MME. BRIGNOL. Your father? He will——don't worry about that.

CECILE. (*Smiling*) Three months without seeing the bailiffs! I'll come back with renewed vigor, ready to face next winter's creditors!

MME. BRIGNOL. I need some strength myself.

(*Enter BRIGNOL with papers.*)

BRIGNOL. How are you, children? (*To CECILE*) Have you told your mother?

CECILE. Yes.

BRIGNOL. (*To his wife*) So you know?

MME. BRIGNOL. Yes.

BRIGNOL. Good. And Carriard! Green with

envy! But I have done a great deal of thinking since yesterday——

CECILE. So have I.

BRIGNOL. Not so much as I have. I have come to the conclusion that we should attach no importance to the insinuations of that fool. Such things are bound to happen. For instance, I thought I'd amuse myself this morning by adding up all our debts. How much do you think we owe?

MME. BRIGNOL. Well, I——

BRIGNOL. Say something.

MME. BRIGNOL. How can——?

BRIGNOL. (*Jotting figures in a note-book which he takes from his pocket*) 68,350 francs. Only that! I've tried to think of other debts, and go through all the books—not a centime more!

CECILE. That's nice!

BRIGNOL. This includes debts of long standing; the creditors have doubtless disappeared long ago. I couldn't pay them if I wanted to. So with a relatively small sum, I could pay off all my creditors.

MME. BRIGNOL. All you need is the money.

BRIGNOL. I'm very glad to have added these up; I thought I owed much more. Now most assuredly something must turn up, and everything will come out perfectly.

MME. BRIGNOL. Do you think so?

BRIGNOL. Your brother, who has led a most regular life, believes I am a lost man. (*Taking up a piece of paper*) Oh, I forgot—! (*He jots down something*) Let him believe it, and have patience!

MME. BRIGNOL. Will you be good enough to listen to me, instead of calculating—that isn't any use now!

BRIGNOL. Well, what is it?

MME. BRIGNOL. I'm going to send Cécile away

with her aunt and uncle to the country, to-morrow.

BRIGNOL. To the country? Why?

MME. BRIGNOL. The child must not see M. Ver-
not any more.

BRIGNOL. Now, now, let's not be over-hasty. I cannot think that M. Vernot—that Maurice, even if he had no intention of asking you to marry him, would so insult you! No!

CECILE. Ha! Ha!

MME. BRIGNOL. For once, have the courage to confess and don't delude yourself. This is not a business matter; this time it is a question of your own daughter's welfare.

CECILE. (*Going to her father*) Please let me go away, Papa! Let's say nothing more about it. (*Smiling*) This is so humiliating! I feel that if I did marry him after all, I shouldn't be happy—yes, it's a superstition!

BRIGNOL. (*Gesticulating to himself, then walking away*) I'll know very soon, in any event, and if—we'll see! (*Going to CECILE*) When do you leave?

CÉCILE. To-morrow.

BRIGNOL. To-morrow—we'll see, we'll see!

(*Enter MME. VALPIERRE.*)

MME. BRIGNOL. (*Going to MME. VALPIERRE*) I'm very anxious to see you, dear.—I have an idea. Could you take charge of Cécile during the summer?

MME. VALPIERRE. Delighted! I was thinking of that myself. Of course we'll take you, dearie.

CÉCILE. Truly?

MME. VALPIERRE. We'll even wait a little while for you, if you can't start at once.

MME. BRIGNOL. There's no necessity for that. The sooner she goes, the better.

BRIGNOL. Thank you, dear——

MME. VALPIERRE. We are doing this in her best interests——

CÉCILE. You'll let me take some books, won't you, Papa? Uncle's library must be rather stiff reading!

BRIGNOL. (*To* MME. VALPIERRE) Shall I see Valpierre before he leaves?

MME. VALPIERRE. If you like.

BRIGNOL. I should. I don't want there to be the shadow of a misunderstanding between us. He's not angry with me now, is he? (MME. VALPIERRE *does not answer*) Is there any good reason why——?

MME. VALPIERRE. My husband advised me not to talk business with you.

BRIGNOL. I should be deeply hurt if he went away with any hard thoughts of me. (MME. VALPIERRE *shows that she does not want to argue the question*) I am willing to furnish irrefutable proofs that he is absolutely mistaken about my intentions on a number of matters. I have a good deal more energy than you give me credit for; I have besides made up my mind that as soon as everything is settled, I shall leave Paris. If it became necessary, I should even leave France and accept a position in a foreign country. I could do it! (*He walks back and forth*) My Heavens, it seems that you and Valpierre came here only in order to discourage me!

MME. VALPIERRE. I say absolutely nothing.

BRIGNOL. You're always with me, you never once leave me—as self-respecting relations ought! Valpierre is furious with me on the most absurd grounds—does he want me to throw myself at his feet? What can I do? There are certain things

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in life which, try as I will, I cannot take seriously. I lack that sense.

MME. VALPIERRE. I have no advice to give you.

BRIGNOL. I'll see Valpierre—we must say good-bye, at least.

(*Enter the MAID.*)

MAID. M. Vernot. (*She goes out*)

BRIGNOL. Ah, here's Vernot. I tell you, I'll soon find out! (*The ladies go out*) When you want something done, do it yourself!

(*Enter MAURICE.*)

MAURICE. My dear M. Brignol, I've come to offer you the position I spoke of a few days ago. It happens to be open: you're just the man for it.

BRIGNOL. Yes—yes——

MAURICE. Shall we go out? I'll introduce you at once.

BRIGNOL. (*After a pause*) My dear friend, I have something to say to you: you've been very kind and amiable on several occasions—I have not forgotten! Well, I am on the point of taking a decisive step.

MAURICE. Why, what's happened?

BRIGNOL. Nothing in particular, but would you like my opinion? I feel that here in Paris I shall never succeed.

MAURICE. Oh!

BRIGNOL. I was just speaking about it to my sister-in-law, and I have determined to leave not only Paris, but France——

MAURICE. Indeed!

BRIGNOL. There are greater opportunities abroad. There's more room for a man with initiative; I have a number of plans which are out of the question here, but which there I can——

MAURICE. There? Where?

BRIGNOL. I've not just yet decided.

MAURICE. (*Aside*) What the devil?—You will admit, Brignol, this is rather sudden!

BRIGNOL. Every resolution I have ever taken has been like that. Before I go, I shall leave you a memorandum of the various sums you have advanced to me. Alas, my friend, we know not who are to live and who die!

MAURICE. Oh, now——!

BRIGNOL. (*Looking at MAURICE*) Meantime I shall send the family to the country with Valpierre: they would be in the way.

MAURICE. To Poitiers?

BRIGNOL. Yes, Poitiers——

MAURICE. Mme. Brignol and——?

BRIGNOL. My daughter. The country will do them good. (*MAURICE is embarrassed. There is a pause*) They leave to-morrow.

MAURICE. To-morrow?!

BRIGNOL. In the morning—with my brother-in-law.—By the way, what are your plans for the summer?

MAURICE. (*Mechanically*) I—I don't know—I——

BRIGNOL. The Commandant is well?

MAURICE. I presume so. I hope Mlle. Cécile's headache, which prevented her coming to the theater last night, is quite over?

BRIGNOL. Quite, thank you. (*Enter the MAID. She gives BRIGNOL an official document and goes out*) Let's see. (*Reads*) "I, Perrot, bailiff, on complaint of herein-mentioned Carriard—" Ha! Ha! From Carriard! In twenty-four hours! He's lost no time! (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Fool!

MAURICE. Is M. Carriard suing you?

BRIGNOL. It's of no importance. (*MAURICE is about to take out his pocket-book*) Now, my

friend—! I thank you kindly, but I cannot think of accepting help again! There is a limit to everything—everything, old man! I'll look after this myself.

(Enter the COMMANDANT.)

COMMANDANT. My dear Brignol!

BRIGNOL. My dear Commandant!

COMMANDANT. *(To MAURICE)* I must have a word with you. I've just come from your place.

MAURICE. I'll come with you, Uncle. *(He takes up his hat)* Will you give my kindest regards to Mme. Brignol and Mlle. Cécile?

BRIGNOL. The ladies went out. I'll see whether they have returned yet.—It's all over—*(He goes out)*

COMMANDANT. I thought you were here!

MAURICE. Have you something important to tell me?

COMMANDANT. Yes. *(Piteously)* I want to go away.

MAURICE. Where?

COMMANDANT. Far away.

MAURICE. Did you lose much last night?

COMMANDANT. Three thousand.

MAURICE. The devil! And what about the system?

COMMANDANT. I didn't use it; I went at it haphazard. I always do that when I'm playing baccara. I came home at five this morning, slept badly, and was depressed.

MAURICE. Well?

COMMANDANT. I have only one thing to do now. I've not left Paris for five years, and I've come to the conclusion that I must retire for a whole season to some unfrequented corner by the sea, where I can rest, and not touch a card.

MAURICE. (*Laughing*) What do you say to Trouville?

COMMANDANT. Don't make fun of me. You're so reasonable, now; come with me. We'll take the five o'clock train.

MAURICE. (*Disturbed*) Go with you?

COMMANDANT. (*Slapping him on the shoulder*) This is no place for you, either. Cut matters short, before you make a fool of yourself.

MAURICE. Hm!

COMMANDANT. Yes, a big fool of yourself! You know you'd be a fool to marry Mlle. Brignol—at your age! Just think! You're not so simple! I warn you, I'll do my best to interfere, and never tire of repeating that you are in wrong.

MAURICE. Something has happened here since yesterday. I can see that.

COMMANDANT. Poor fellow! If you bother wondering what happens or what doesn't happen to Brignol—! I blame you severely for the way you've behaved toward the young lady, but then you saved her father from the devil of a bad situation; that is some excuse—a sort of compensation.

MAURICE. She is going away.

COMMANDANT. Going away?

MAURICE. To stay with her uncle in the country. And Brignol says he's going abroad. Do you make it out?

COMMANDANT. Ha! If I could make out what Brignol means—! Well, if she's going away, why can't you, too? (*Urging him toward the door*) Let's go; I have a carriage——

MAURICE. Why the devil is she going?

COMMANDANT. You can't find out.

MAURICE. I must first tell Brignol.

COMMANDANT. Write to him from Brittany! Can't you go away without his permission? Ridiculous! (*He seizes MAURICE by the arm*) Come,

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come! (*He takes MAURICE out; MAURICE goes with bowed head. Enter CÉCILE. She waits for a moment until the men are gone. Then she goes to the book-case, and makes up a packet of books*)

CÉCILE. I wish it were to-morrow!
(*Enter MAURICE hurriedly, not seeing CÉCILE.*)

MAURICE. I must leave a word for Brignol. That's the simplest way. (*He catches sight of CÉCILE, who is about to retire*) Oh, Mlle. Cécile, you are in a hurry!

CÉCILE. Oh, no. I—I was looking for some books.

MAURICE. Your father told me you were leaving Paris soon?

CÉCILE. I am: to-morrow. My aunt is good enough to offer to take care of me for awhile.

MAURICE. Are you glad to go?

CÉCILE. Very. Good-bye, Monsieur.

MAURICE. We are not parting on the best of terms, Mademoiselle——

CÉCILE. What have we quarrelled about? The spring's here, and I'm going away. I suppose you are, too? I merely say good-bye; is there anything wrong in that?

MAURICE. As a matter of fact, I am *not* going away.

CÉCILE. What of it, Monsieur?

MAURICE. Come, Mademoiselle, I have some right, at least, to be surprised at this sudden change in your attitude toward me. I think I deserve some explanation?

CÉCILE. Oh, I was forgetting. (*Taking up the books on the table*) I learned yesterday by pure accident, that you had done my father a great service. (*A gesture from MAURICE*) I have not yet thanked you, but I now take the opportunity of doing so——

MAURICE. The idea! I don't want that! I have merely done M. Brignol a small favor.

CÉCILE. I beg your pardon. I am most grateful!

MAURICE. (*Laughing*) Not at all. I don't pretend to have saved your father by having advanced him a few—Please let us say nothing more about it.

CÉCILE. Why not? For most people, money is so precious and sacred that those who lend it often believe they are permitted every liberty toward the recipient. They can even ask for it back in the most brutal and haughty way——

MAURICE. Oh!

CÉCILE. I have seen my father treated like a dog, in my very presence, by a man to whom he owed the most insignificant amount——

MAURICE. I hope you don't mean to compare——?

CÉCILE. Of course, I shouldn't think of comparing you with M. Carriard! You are at least better bred! But there is one thing I shall never forget, and I shall tell you what it is, since you ask for an explanation, and that is that you have taken advantage of a situation in which my father was practically helpless, and behaved—as you have behaved!

MAURICE. I?

CÉCILE. I see, you had no intention of marrying the daughter of a man with no money, your debtor—a man of your position! I know enough of life to realize that such marriages don't occur. There is one thing I can't forgive: that you could have thought, because I knew you were rich, I was capable of——!

MAURICE. I swear, Cécile——

CÉCILE. Yesterday,—you were standing just where you are now—you told me you loved me. Who knows—if we had been alone, you might have suggested a rendezvous? If you dared speak

that way to me, if you dared think that of me, it was because my father was under obligations to you! You said to yourself, "There's a little girl who's tired of the life she's leading. She has no future, no dowry, no chance to marry. She'll be delighted if I offer—" There you were mistaken, Monsieur. I don't believe I have a very brilliant future, but I can resign myself to what I have. I do not know whether my father has committed crimes or not, and I don't want to know; I only know that he is good, generous, that he loves me with all his heart. I shall never leave him. When you thought I would, you were guilty of a disloyal and low thought. If I tell you all this, it is in order that there shall be no misunderstanding, that in the future you will conduct your business dealings with my father on a purely business footing, and not try to see me again. Now may I go?

MAURICE. I have only one thing to say, Mademoiselle; you are absolutely mistaken about my intentions! It's quite ridiculous——

CÉCILE. Thank you for the excuses!

MAURICE. Let me make a clean breast of the whole thing! No, Cécile, I have not been loyal in my relations with you. I love you, and to-day perhaps I was allowing you to leave, I was going away myself without seeing you again! I must have been mad! How could I have had any other thought or wish? I'm a fool, I didn't see my own happiness! I don't deserve your love, Cécile; I hardly deserve your forgiveness. But—*do* forgive me, Cécile! Don't blame me, don't say a word to me! Give me your hand—there, that's enough!

(CÉCILE gives him her hand, which he kisses. She then looks for the books she had left on the table. Enter the COMMANDANT.)

COMMANDANT. Here, I've been waiting an hour! I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle.

CÉCILE. (*Bowing*) Monsieur!

MAURICE. (*To CÉCILE*) My uncle is just in the nick of time. We'll wait here for your father.

CÉCILE. (*To MAURICE*) Until later! (*She goes out*)

COMMANDANT. Are we going to Brittany, or are we not? I'm tired, I tell you. I even went to sleep in the cab.

MAURICE. We are not going.

COMMANDANT. Good! I didn't get to bed till five this morning, so I suppose you'll excuse me if I take a nap?

MAURICE. Just a moment, Uncle! Sit down. I've just seen Cécile here, and——

COMMANDANT. Yes?

MAURICE. We spoke together for a few moments, and I—I'm going to marry her.

COMMANDANT. You're going to marry her? You're of age, you ought to know what you're about.

MAURICE. Do you really disapprove?

COMMANDANT. What I have not approved of was your uncertainty. Now that you have made a definite decision, let me congratulate you.

MAURICE. She's the most charming girl I ever saw.

COMMANDANT. You should have told me at once! Now I'm going to bed.

MAURICE. I should have had to wake you up anyway, Uncle.

COMMANDANT. Why?

MAURICE. To have you ask for the lady for me. You're my nearest relative.

COMMANDANT. I ask Brignol for his daughter? I! Never! (*He rises*) You'll never get me to do that, after the way Brignol has treated me!

MAURICE. (*Rising*) Uncle!

COMMANDANT. Don't! Never, I say!

MAURICE. Uncle, you were my guardian, you're my only living relative. You must help me. (*Taking the COMMANDANT'S arm*) Please do me the favor of waiting for M. Brignol here; he'll be back before long. Then ask him. I'll give you a quarter of an hour. I've consulted you, and now you must.

COMMANDANT. If Brignol is not here in fifteen minutes, I'll go.

MAURICE. He will be.

COMMANDANT. By the way, what are you going to do with this father-in-law of yours?

MAURICE. I've been thinking of that for the past two weeks. I'll let him live on my estate at Poitiers.

COMMANDANT. The devil!

MAURICE. We'll hardly ever go there, you or I. It's good for nothing. I'll buy another, with a hunting-park, for you.

COMMANDANT. Good! Be back in twenty minutes, and I'll have everything arranged. Go in the cab, and take my valise to my rooms. That will help you kill time.

(MAURICE goes out.)

COMMANDANT. Seventeen times in succession! What bad luck! That's not happened at the club for three years! Phenomenal! I am a marked man! (*Little by little he falls asleep, his head resting on his right arm. BRIGNOL enters, carrying newspapers. He goes to lay them on the desk, and sees that someone is present*)

BRIGNOL. A client!—Asleep! Why, it's the Commandant!

COMMANDANT. (*Awaking*) Ah, Brignol! (*Rising*) Monsieur!

BRIGNOL. Make yourself quite at home, Commandant. To what do I owe the honor of your visit?

COMMANDANT. I have two words to say to you.

BRIGNOL. Sit down, Commandant: I am listening.

COMMANDANT. (*After a pause*) You have played me a nice trick!

BRIGNOL. Is it my fault if you lost?

COMMANDANT. That isn't what I refer to: I was going away to Brittany with my nephew at five o'clock. We were all ready.

BRIGNOL. Are you going——?

COMMANDANT. Instead of going to Brittany, we came here. Do you know what I must do? (*A gesture from BRIGNOL*) I have come to ask you for your daughter's hand—for him!

BRIGNOL. (*Going with outstretched hands to the COMMANDANT*) My dear Commandant, I have the greatest esteem for you, and I am profoundly glad of this union with your family. It has been my dream—I confess it!

(*Enter MAURICE.*)

BRIGNOL. (*To MAURICE*) Come here, my dear son! (*With outstretched hands*) You're a splendid boy!

MAURICE. My dear M. Brignol——

BRIGNOL. I'll bring you your wife! (*He goes out*)

COMMANDANT. You know, I'm beginning to like that Brignol.

MAURICE. The day he sees the last of his creditors, he will be a perfect father-in-law!

(*Enter MME. BRIGNOL and CÉCILE, followed by MME. VALPIERRE and BRIGNOL.*)

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MME. BRIGNOL. (*To MAURICE*) Monsieur, it is with the profoundest joy that I give you my daughter.

BRIGNOL. (*Aside to MME. VALPEIRRE*) You see? There! Everything always comes out beautifully!

Curtain

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